



Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society

www.birdsonthebay.ca

January 3, 2023

Mayor & Council, City of White Rock
15322 Buena Vista Ave, White Rock, BC, V4B 1Y6

Re: update on Natural History Interpretive Signage

Dear Mayor Knight and Councillors,

On behalf of the Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society (FoSBS), I would like to update and encourage you to continue support for the Natural History interpretive signs that we worked on so diligently to provide to the city. First a short background:

The City of White Rock Environmental Plan 2008 states on page 14: "The City of White Rock proposes to preserve and manage Semiahmoo Bay as a natural area in accordance with the Fraser River Estuary Management Plan, and will work with other agencies (Environment Canada, British Columbia Ministry of Environment) and stewardship groups (such as Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society, Little Campbell Watershed Society and Shared Waters Alliance) to raise awareness among residents and visitors about environmental sensitivity of Semiahmoo Bay."

The Natural History Interpretive signs go a long way to achieving this goal. Why do we ask for your support? Addressing the city's environmental goals, FoSBS was requested by the City of White Rock's Park Manager to develop new signs to replace the faded and outdated ones in 2006. With trust and good will, FoSBS immediately went to work and contracted a researcher to help develop text.

When the Parks Manager of that time left the City, the project was put on hold indefinitely. Then in 2012 White Rock's CEO contacted us and stated the signs were to be finished immediately or would see permanent removal.

FoSBS volunteers immediately went into action and prioritized sign development, providing hundreds of hours of design work around donated copy-right photos. Criteria included working from the existing sign themes originally developed by the White Rock & Surrey Naturalists for the City and sizing them so they would cover the old signs.

FoSBS developed eight signs covering habitats, features and geology of the city environment and the flora and fauna found here in Semiahmoo Bay. FoSBS volunteers assisted WR staff to install the new signs by providing stainless steel screws and labour and both the Parks Manager and the Leisure Services manager attended the installation and admired the signs.

In 2017 FoSBS was contacted to assist with removal of the signs as Memorial Park was to be re-developed. WR staff assured FoSBS the signs would be put back upon completion of the park. FoSBS was asked to store the signs.

In 2019, WR staff suggested another location, at the 'Hump' railing on Marine Drive. This option would mean much less visitation and did not properly align with the signage content. The signage was designed for a specific siting and was to be viewed with the specific feature/habitat/landscape elements aligned with the signs. FoSBS learned at that time that the Memorial Park Plan had excluded any environmental education or land-based waymarking.

In 2020 FoSBS had a few discussions with WR staff but told they are developing their own signs using FoSBS content and giving no credit. The example shown at that time showed text and photos completely out of context with habitat.

In 2022, WR staff agreed to meet at the Pier to discuss the signs, and FoSBS agreed to collaborate on a new design. FoSBS facilitated staff with editing our content and providing photos as directed by WR staff, another 20 hours of community volunteer effort. The option provided by staff did not seem appropriate to FoSBS but input to the design was dismissed.



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September 19th, 2022, FoSBS attended Council as a delegation to clarify the community involvement legacy of the signs and Council unanimously supported the Natural History interpretive signs to be placed back in their original location.

FoSBS proceeded as directed by Council to update content in preparation for printing, met with senior staff on location to discuss mounting options etc. Senior staff at that point requested that FoSBS reformat the signs to be an additional 8" in height to conform to the preferred mounting format of the City. FoSBS responded immediately to do so, contributing another additional 45 hours of work.

In late December, FoSBS was requested by senior staff to again attend as a delegation to Council for the January 16th, 2023 meeting. FoSBS has agreed to do so and provide an updated PPT showing the staff requested change to dimensions and updated information. Council also requested QR codes be placed on the signs and though drafted, FoSBS would like to suggest that because information and web links often change it may be advisable that the QR codes be developed separately as stickers ~~that can~~ then be changed as information changes.

FoSBS has advocated for almost seven years to have the signs put back, not just because of the large investment provided to the City of White Rock but also for the loss of raised public awareness and knowledge of residents and visitors about how very special the City of White Rock and Semiahmoo Bay are.

We hope you will support our community investment in an important part of this City's heritage.
Thank you for your consideration to our concern.

Sincerely,

Marg Cuthbert, President
blueheron@birdsonthebay.ca

PS. FoSBS, has developed & distributed:

The Georgia Basin Habitat Atlas: Boundary Bay and numerous educational brochures:

Boundary Bay, A Special Place in English, French and Mandarin

Importance of Eelgrass Meadows, updated to include info on the invasive European green crab

Importance of Forage Fish

Birds of Surrey, includes White Rock

Get to Know Coastal Native Plants

The Fraser delta Boundary Bay Birding Biodiversity Trail Guide, includes White Rock

Get to Know Midshipmen

FoSBS, worked with the WR Museum to provide two exhibits, the first being the Birds on the Bay which had the highest numerical visitation in the museum's history, over 11,000 visitors. FoSBS provided speakers and guided walks in the City. A second exhibit on Boundary Bay included our donation of a Seaquarium (later donated to WR Elementary) and weekly interpretive programs and beach walks.

FoSBS volunteers in 2004, installed the WR Native Plant Demonstration Garden in partnership with the Native Plant Society of BC, City of White Rock and the WR Museum. We continue to maintain the garden with monthly work parties, monitoring signage etc.

FoSBS developed and installed five Native Plant Interpretive signs which are located along the railing in the garden.

*With continuing good will, FoSBS offered to do marine mammal and bird ID signs for the west beach washroom deck and nature signs along greenways throughout the city.